

## **SPEECH BY LEWIS MITCHELL BEFORE THE 63<sup>RD</sup> MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE, 1887 (excerpted)**

*Lewis Mitchell, Representative of the Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indians*

I was authorized by the Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indians to come here before you for the purpose of making known to you what the Passamaquoddy Indians have done for the American people, and how we have been used by the American people and how we used them. In 1775 or 1776, in the struggle between Great Britain and America, your people came to us for assistance. You authorized Col. John Allan to speak to us and you said, "He is our mouth, believe what he says to you." After many kind words and promises, Francis Joseph, who was the chief of the tribe at that time, accepted his offer. He promised to go and help his people gain their independence. Immediately he sent his captains to different parts of his country to notify his people to prepare for immediate war. In a few days Francis Joseph gathered an army of six hundred men. At that time, and many years before that, the Passamaquoddy Tribe was the headquarters of the Abnaki Nation.

Passamaquoddy Tribe can show you by a letter from Col. John Allan when he authorized the Passamaquoddy Indians to guard the coast from Machias to Passamaquoddy, and authorized them to seize the enemy's vessels. And according to his orders we can show you by the affidavit, Capt. Sopiell Socktoma, with fifty others of his tribe, captured an armed schooner in Passamaquoddy Bay, and they ran her to Machias and gave her up to Col. John Allan.

We know the Indians who served in that war are passed out of existence, but the Passamaquoddy Tribe helped the Americans in that war, and the tribe is still in existence. Now we bountily ask your attention to help us by letting the Legislature examine the papers and refer them to Congress, if they see fit.

In the treaties of 1725, 1794, and Governor Dummer's treaty of 1727, and in the laws of Massachusetts and Maine at their separation, we were guaranteed the right to hunt and fish forever.

In the year 1854 or 1857 some dishonest person or persons presented a petition to the Maine Legislature, asking the State to sell the Indians' land – Indians did not need it – so the Legislature passed a resolve, that a certain piece of land, situated in the Town of Perry, owned by the Indians, would be sold by public auction, on such day, at Perry (they must have arranged everything so they wouldn't bid against each other) and that land was sold for the small sum of \$500.00. The Indians opposed the sale of it. Now their firewood costs the Indians of Pleasant Point \$1,500.00 a year.

If that land had not been sold, the Indians would not suffer for want of firewood. Thousands of cords of cordwood have been cut, and wood is on it yet. The land cleared by the Indians was also sold. Now we claim again that this is not right. An Indian agent himself bought this land afterward and again when we lost the claim on the Islands the case Granger vs. Indians, we not only lost the claim, but \$2,500.00 out of the Indians in favor of Mr. Granger.

Just consider, today, how many rich men there are in Calais, in St. Stephen, Milltown, Machias, East Machias, Columbia, Cherryfield, and other lumbering towns. We see a good many of them worth thousands and even millions of dollars. We ask ourselves, how do they make most of their money? Answer is, they make it on lumber or timber once owned by the Passamaquoddy Indians.

How many of their privileges have been broken? How many of their lands have been taken from them by authority of the State? Now, we say to ourselves, these Indians ought to have everything they ask for. They deserve assistance. We are sent here to help the poor and defend their rights.

Now, this plainly shows us how much worse a people of five hundred and thirty souls are, stripped of their whole country, their privileges on which they depend for their living; all the land they claim to own now being only ten acres. If one or two men in this body were Indians, they would fight like braves for their rights.

Now look at yourselves and see whether I am right or wrong. If you find any insulting language in my speech, I ask your pardon. I don't mean to insult anybody, but simply tell you of our wrong.